

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

FESTIVAL FLOWERS

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Life in Christ (John 6: 56-69)

In chapter 6 John has developed a clear progression of thought from feeding the five thousand, to Jesus as the bread of life, to Jesus giving his flesh for the life of the world, and to the bread and wine of the eucharist. Now John draws that progression of thought to its conclusion. 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood', says Jesus, 'abide in me, and I in them... Whoever eats me will live because of me... The one who eats this bread will live forever.' This is the guarantee of new life in Christ, fed on the eucharist.

Our image to stimulate reflection on new life experienced within the eucharistic community is *festival flowers*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 6: 56-58; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

Just as the living Father sent me,
and I live because of the Father,
so whoever eats me will live because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven,
not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died.
But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Thank you Lord Jesus,
for sharing bread with the five thousand
when they were hungry.

Thank you Lord Jesus,
for sharing bread with your disciples
before you suffered death.

Thank you Lord Jesus,
for sharing bread with your people
in the communion service.

Thank you Lord Jesus.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 6: 56-69

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 6: 56-69)

Begin exploring John's understanding of new life experienced within the eucharistic community by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the significance of the disciples saying 'This teaching is difficult'?
- What is the significance of many of Jesus' disciples leaving him?
- How do you interpret Jesus asking the twelve if they wished to go away?
- What do you make of Simon Peter's reply to Jesus?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore connected themes elsewhere in John's Gospel.

- John 1: 35-37
- John 1: 49
- John 12: 49-50
- John 17: 8

Explore Peter's confession of faith in the synoptic tradition.

- Mark 8: 27-29

Explore images of flowers in the Old Testament.

- Song of Songs 2: 12-13
- Song of Songs 4: 16
- Isaiah 35: 1-2
- Hosea 14: 4-7

Proper 16 (Year B) Sunday 22 August 2021

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's understanding of new life experienced within the eucharistic community by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Commentary on John 6: 66-69
- Flower festivals in churches
- Flowers and wellbeing

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's understanding of new life experienced within the eucharistic community in *festival flowers*. Draw on your own experience of engaging with displays of flowers. For example:

- What is your experience of visiting gardens in bloom?
- What is your experience of visiting flower festivals in churches?
- What is your experience of growing flowers?

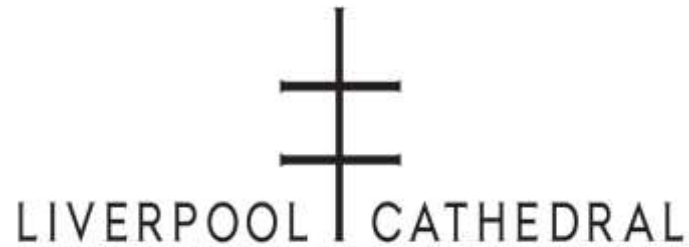
What have you learned about festival flowers?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's understanding of new life experienced within the eucharistic community.

- Make a collage of flowers in bloom.
- Arrange displays of flowers.
- Make paper flowers for display.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of festival flowers.

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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